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Sketchings.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Boston, March 1st, 1855.

I INTENDED to have mentioned in my last, that Chantrey's statue of Washington stands in the State House. On seeing it I involuntarily contrasted it with Greenough's Franklin, which I had just left. The Washington is another proof that it is useless to seek for the realization of a National Art from the hands of foreign artists. It is impossible that a stranger to our institutions and mental characteristics, should produce a representation of Washington which shall satisfy us. Chantrey's statue is a weak, elegant, simpering gentleman.

"Strength's knots and knarls all pared away
And varnish in their places."

If I had my way I would demolish it, and put up a plaster cast of almost anything in its place. The fact that it is by a celebrated man amounts to nothing, since if the artist's greatness did not avail to throw some new light on the hero's character, his work is worthless, and deserves only to be destroyed as a failure. The truth is, that if we would cull our works of Art as the Spartans did their children, we should benefit public taste very much. A bad picture or statue has no use whatever, and serves only to accustom the eye to imperfection and deformity. If we may not have perfect works, still let us not be content with those which are evidently inferior to our highest attainment. Perhaps Chantrey, like Marochetti with his Washington, fashioned a former work to suit the new purpose, and from a smooth-faced English statesman made a Washington by a change in features. Marochetti made of his

Richard, the Lion-hearted, a Washington, by changing the coat and hat—little else. This won't do, and yet it is all that can be expected of those who have no personal interest in the man. It is perhaps all that an American sculptor would do with Sir Robert Peel or Lamartine.

But enough of Chantrey. I have seen much more of Allston since my last date, and begin to understand the attachment the Bostonians have for his works. There is an atmosphere of quiet grace around them, a gentleness and reserve of power which must represent the man. That which at first seemed indecision, now seems a dreaminess, as though the picture wore a reverie of form and color. In this I find the individuality which I missed at first. The "Rosalie" first made me to understand this, and once seen, it grew clearer with each picture I saw.

There is talk of a monument at Plymouth to the Pilgrim Fathers. If I were going to suggest a design, it would be a colossal plough. A proposition has been laid before the committee by Billings, who is both architect and artist, to raise a group of colossal granite statues, the largest being about 75 feet in height. The design I have not seen, but Billings is a man of high feeling for Art, and extremely facile and graceful as a designer, and his friends have the fullest faith in his powers. I will get the details of the design as soon as possible.

There seems quite a mania here among the ladies of artistic feeling, for sculpture, and I hear of several new candidates for public notice and encouragement. This is as it ought to be, for there is no doubt whatever in my mind, that if the female mind could be turned, to any great extent, to the earnest pursuit of Art, it would realize some results not yet seen by the world. Feminine grace and gentleness must have their expression in some forms of beauty which the stronger and coarser masculine mind cannot attain. I am confident that this is a field where woman may attain a position which shall neither be envied nor disputed, and where we men may yield the palm without the mortification of giving up our cherished "superiority of mental power." Here the highest qualities of mind of the sex may have full play and work to entire advantage. I hope that Boston will do well by her protégés.

W. J. S.

DEAR CRAYON:—While the majority of the artist brotherhood are in their city *ateliers* diligently engaged in reproducing in grand and varied composition, those "bits" gleaned from the fair bosom of earth in summer, and rarely getting a glimpse of the blue heaven, except from between brick and mortar walls, or, worse still, through the dusky skylights of their fifth story retreats, there are a few snugly ensconced in their country domiciles enjoying a feast of nature unknown to those in the noisy town. Many of this number may stay in the country from necessity, but yet there is a great virtue in this necessity. While the city artist must not be slothful in his labor to meet the expenses of a city life, the one in the country can take his ease, and not worry about the rent to be paid at the end of the quarter. We, in the country, roam at will—thanks to our protective "cowhides," and thick wool hunting-jacket; the snow does not stop our wanderings. The woods even

do not bar the sketcher's ingress; and yet he must be a bluff and hardy one who penetrates to the haunts where nature has made her favorite seat; where the growling northwester chafe the boughs together in wild, low breakings; and the music of the harmony breaks in grand chaotic strains upon the ear, in strange contrast to the low voice of the struggling brooklet stealing around the frozen logs that try to stop its progress. When

"The bland wind comes winnowing from the south,"

we can settle on our tripod stool in the more open places, and get at the outlines of the intricate tree-forms, in all their virgin purity, standing out weird-like and bare, tossing their jewelled sprays in glee to the wind as it passes o'er and goes on soughing through the dark old pines on the hill-side. Who that loves Beauty for its own sake and for the sake of Him who made it, and keeps the perception of it alive in our hearts, and decks all external nature with such profuseness of it—can forego the sight of it in winter? "Oh! it is so cold and boisterous," says some one as he sits in his easy-chair before the well-filled grate of anthracite. What if it is? For your fire of anthracite, have we not the monarchs of the forest prostrate at our door? And, when the blasts howl piteously without, can we not roll a "forestick" of the close-grained maple upon the great fire-dogs, and, as the family draw around the glowing logs, take some seat in the corner, and watch the play of the lights and shadows over the floor in bright, golden, sooty mazes? Does not the cascade build its towers and turrets of fairy fretwork, and the dripping ledge mantle its brow with gleaming vagaries? Do not the grasses around the warm springs of the lowlands shoot forth and peer up into Heaven's smiling face, and ask a sunlit blessing on their shivering forms? The spring flowers wait not for their release, but struggle through their captor's garments, heralded by the bright cirrus, called dreamily forth by the warm April sunshine. Is the spirit to flutter against brick walls, when nature is continually weaving before our eyes such glorious sights? But, who are to note all these varied changes? The farmer is absorbed in the well-doing of his stock; the lawyers with his "briefs;" and the merchant in ensuring protection against the overtures of winter at so much per yard. Why not approach in winter, as well as summer, the temple of Nature, and offer upon her shrine our silent thanks to Him who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and garners the thunderbolt in His own mighty hand. Are we blaspheming, when we open the book of Nature and try to lisp forth, with stammering tongues, the primary precepts? Heaven forbid that we make a profanation of her dictates! As the judge said, after hearing contradictory evidence, "There is a lie somewhere." Either we are wrong in looking through nature up to the Great Infinite, or the majority are wrong in supposing that the earth was made for anything more than to produce so much per acre. There has been a time when there has been implanted in each heart a gerim which, if fostered, would have brought the fruit of appreciation of the external world to the owner's mind, richly savoring of Divine love. This has been smothered, never to shoot forth again in many, perhaps; and yet very many there are who might uncover this hidden treasure, which has slept a night of years, and still find it glowing with warmth and life, ready to burst forth and bloom at their bidding.

COOL GREY:

At St. Louis, a statue of Daniel Webster has just been received from Italy, and presented to the Mercantile Library Association, by H. D. Bacon, Esq. It is said to be by a sculptor named Verhogen. We honor the liberality of

the donor, but what led him to procure from Italy a statue of Daniel Webster by a foreign artist! The same gentlemen has also presented to the library a collection of pictures, mostly French, and copies of noted pictures in foreign galleries.

A CORRESPONDENT writes us from Detroit, that Mr. Alvin Bradish has in his studio two full-length portraits, painted for the Young Men's Association of that place. One is a portrait of Washington Irving and the other of General Cass. Mr. Bradish is fortunate enough to be the possessor of an original sketch by Wilkie, made for his picture of the "Jews' Harp."

DANTE AND BEATRICE.—In an extract from an English paper, published in THE CRAYON last week, giving an account of engravings now being executed in Paris, it was therein stated that the original picture of Dante and Beatrice, by Scheffer, was in Rotterdam. This is a mistake; the original is in the possession of Chas. T. Perkins, Esq., of Boston; the duplicate is in Rotterdam.

THE "CRAYON" has some severe, but perchance just, strictures on "Our Coinage." It says, "There is probably no civilized nation whose coins are so unartistic as ours"—and proves the saying true. It speaks of "the wretched things which greet us when we draw a coin from our pockets, &c." It argues for a reform; but seems to overlook one difficulty in the way thereof, viz: that most of those whose indignant taste might lead to better things have not a sufficiency of the specie, even in its present ugly shape, to give their remonstrance much weight.—*Christian Register*.

FROST IN THE WINDOW.

Books have been written of painted windows, and journeys long and expensive have been made to see them. And without a doubt they are both curious and more than curious; they are admirable. One such work of Art, standing through generations of men and making countless hearts glad with its beauty, is a treasure for which any community may be grateful.

But are we so destitute of decorated windows as, at first, one might suppose? Last night the thermometer sank nearly to zero, and see what business nature has had on hand! Every pane of glass is etched and figured as never Moorish artist decorated Alhambra. Will you pass it unexamined, simply because it cost you nothing—because it is so common—because it is, this morning, the property of so many in common—because it was wrought by nature and not by man? Do not do so. Learn rather to enjoy it for its own elegance, and for God's sake, who gave to frosts such artist tendencies.

The children are wiser than their elders. They are already at the window, interpreting these mysterious pictures. One has discovered a silent, solitary lake, extremely beautiful, among stately white cliffs. Another points out a forest of white fir trees and pines, growing in rugged grandeur. There are in succession discovered mountains, valleys, cities of glorious structures, a little confused in their outline by distance. There are various beasts, too; here a bear coming down to the water; birds in flocks, or sitting voiceless and solitary. There are rivers flowing through plains; and elephants, and buffalos, and herds of cattle. There are dogs and serpents, trees and horses, ships and men. Besides all these phantom creatures, there are shadowy ornaments of every degree of beauty, simple or complex, running through the whole scale, from a mere dash of the artist's tool to the most studied and elaborate compositions.

Neither does Night repeat itself. Every window has its separate design. Every pane of glass is individual and peculiar. You see only one appearance of anxiety in the artist, and that last time and room should fail for the expression

of the endless imaginations which throng his fertile soil.

There is a generous disregard of all fictitious or natural distinctions of society in this beautiful working. The designs upon the poor-house windows are just as exquisite as any upon the rich man's mansion. The little child's bedroom window is just as carefully handled as the proudest window in any room of state. The church can boast of nothing better than the emblazonings on the window of the poor seamstress who lives just by. For a few hours everybody is rich. Every man owns pictures, and galleries of pictures!

But then comes the Iconoclast—the Sun! Ah, remorseless eyes! why will you gaze out all these exquisite figures and lines? Art thou jealous lest Night shall make sweeter flowers in Winter time than thou canst in all the Summer time? For shame, envious Father of Flowers! There is no end of thy abundance. Around the Equator the Summer never dies; flowers perfume the whole Ecliptic. And spreading out thence, the Summer shall travel northward, and for full eight months thou hast the temperate zones in thy portfolio. Will not all the flowers of the tropics and of eight-month zones suffice? Will not all the myriads that hide under leaves, that climb up for air to tree-tops, that nestle in rock-crevices, or sheet the open plains with wide effulgence, that ruffle the rocks and cover out of sight all rude and homely things—suffice thy heart, that thou must come and rob from our Winter canvas all the fine things, the rootless trees, the flowers that blossom without growing, the wilderness of pale shrubberies that grow by night to die by day? Rapacious Sun, thou shouldst set us a better example.

But the indefatigable Night repairs the desolation. New pictures supply the waste ones. New cathedrals, new forests, fringed and blossoming, new sceneries, and new races of extinct animals. We are rich every morning, and poor every noon. One day with us measures the space of two hundred years in kingdoms—a hundred years to build up, and a hundred years to decay and destroy; twelve hours to overspread the evanescent pane with glorious beauty, and twelve to extract and dissipate the pictures!

How is the frost-picturing like fancy painting! Thus we fill the vagrant hours with innumerable designs, and paint visions upon the visionless sphere of Time, which, with every revolution, destroys our work, restoring it back to the realm of waste phantasies!

But is this not a type of finer things than arrant fictions? Is it not a mournful vision of many a virtuous youth, overlaid with every device of virtue which parental care could lay on, dissolved before the hot breath of love, blurred, and quite rubbed out!

Or shall we read a lesson for a too unpractical mind, full of airy theories, and dainty plans of exquisite good, that lie upon the surface of the mind, fair indeed, till touched? The first attempt at realization is as when an artist tries to tool these frosted sketches, the most exquisite touch of ripest skill would mar and destroy them!

Or, rather, shall we not reverently and rejoicingly behold in these morning pictures wrought without color, and kissed upon the window by the cold lips of Winter, another instance of that Divine Beneficence of beauty, which suffuses the heavens, clothes the earth, and royally decorates the months, and sends them forth through all hours, all seasons, all latitudes, to fill the earth with joy, pure as the Great Heart from which it had its birth.—*The Independent.*

FOREIGN ART GOSSIP.

CEILING OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL.—The Sistine Ceiling forms in its section a flattened

arch-plane; in the centre of which is depicted, in nine compartments, a series of Scriptural subjects, from the Creation of the world to the Resurrection of Man: great dramatic and statuesque groups, not subtle and graceful in composition, but startling, awful and colossal. We feel as we view them that Michael Angelo was pre-eminently the painter of the Old Testament, and Raphael of the New. The mind of the one, gloomy, stern, and profound, has an appreciation for the majesty and power, the other for the love and mercy, of God. The one sees the thunders from Sinai—the other the radiance of the Mount of the Transfiguration. The one, like St. Peter, is always snatching up the sword—the other, like St. John, rests his head smilingly upon the Saviour's bosom. In considering the human form, Michael Angelo exaggerated matter, but tried in vain, like the Greek, to raise it to a level with spirit. His men have demoniac, eternal, and untiring strength; their bodies are transparent, and we see the working and antagonism of the muscles: they are always Titans; sometimes they are theatrical wrestlers, and occasionally they are only hired posture-makers. Form had for him attractions even superior to those of Expression, but his form was Gothic, and not Greek form. It is singular that Buonarotti, the noble's son, displays the coarse strength and brawny vigor of a robust laborer—while Raphael, the son of a poor painter of Urbino, is always aristocratic in the faces of his figures, which move as graceful and delicately as if they were Grecian statuary quickened into life.

But to return to the ceiling. At the springings of the vaults all round the chapel are introduced the majestic Prophets and Sibyls, typical of the Redemption; and between these and the arches below are lunettes adorned with Holy Families and figures illustrative of the scriptural genealogy of Christ and the Virgin; and these compositions are bound together by a network of architectural ornament and allegorical imagery.

Over these creations did the stormy mind of Michael Angelo dwell, in the intervals of his rude conflicts with envious masters of the ceremonies and revengeful Popes, arrogant cardinals and contemptuous nobles—of journeys to Florence and flights from Rome. We think of him with his contempt for *dilettanti*, his defiance of impatient pontiffs, and his proud assertion of the dignity and glory of Art. We think of him again, blind, infirm and grey-headed, groping round the *Torso* that he had admired when at work at his *David* seventy years before. We see his flat nose and swelling brows, his small eyes and prominent ears, his broad shoulders and neglected dress; we remember about this very ceiling his horror at the damp spots; his quarrel with Bramante and the poor carpenter, whose daughter he dowered with the price of the abandoned scaffold; the haste of the fiery Pope and the fear of the hurried painter. It was during this very work, when Michael Angelo asked leave of the Pope to spend a week in Florence, Julius replied, "But when will this chapel be finished?" Buonarotti replied, "When I can, Holy Father." "When I can! when I can!" said the Pope, striking him with his staff, "Thou shalt finish it, and that quickly." But ere the painter had left the presence, Julius sent in haste his chamberlain after him with an atonement in the shape of 500 crowns.

Very vast is the scheme of this Sistine Ceiling. It contains the Separation of Light and Darkness, the Benediction of the Earth, and other epochs of the Genesis, the Creation of Adam and Eve, the Sacrifice of Abel, the story of Noah, the Death of Goliath and Holofernes, the Brazen Serpent, and the Decree of Ahu-suerus. Besides the Sibyls, are the Prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel.—*Athenaeum.*

HINTS TO YOUNG ARTISTS.—The dilettante, when he has done all he can, excuses his work by saying it is not yet finished. In fact it never can be finished, because it was not properly begun. The master, with a few strokes, gives to his work an air of finish; finished or not, it is complete at every stage. The cleverest dilettante feels his way amid uncertainty, and with each step of progress of the work, the insecurity of the foundation becomes more and more apparent. At the end, too late to correct it, the error first becomes evident; and thus the work is, in fact, not susceptible of finish.

In true Art there are no preparatory schools, though there must be preparation, of which the best means is to have even the lowest scholar take part in the work of the master. Color-grinding has been the first step of many excellent artists.

Another is the spirit of imitation, towards which the natural common activity of man is turned, through the influence of some talented artist, who performs the difficult with facility.—*Goethe.*

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